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Recollections in “Rockollection”

Musical Memory and Countermemory in 1970s France

by

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Abstract: Retro music was a cultural phenomenon in 1970s France. Nostalgia for '60s music in France, however, illustrates tensions concerning the construction of the recent cultural past. While some musicians recognized the centrality of translation songs as part of the experience of the 1960s, others presented a countermemory that ignored them. The decision of this latter group to ignore the history of translation songs reflects cultural tastes of the 1970s rather than the lived experience of the 1960s. This article outlines the history of translation songs in sixties France and explores the retro phenomenon in French music and its engagement with '60s pop music. In light of the waning popularity of translation songs by the end of the decade, it argues for the importance of Laurent Voulzy's 1977 hit record “Rockollection” in recasting France's musical past.

Keywords: *globalization – origin – revival – translation studies – yéyé*

Résumé : La musique rétro a été un phénomène culturel important des années 1970 en France. La nostalgie de la musique des années 1960 permet toutefois d'apercevoir les tensions relatives à la construction d'un passé culturel récent. Tandis que certains plaçaient les chansons traduites au cœur de l'expérience des années 1960, d'autres proposaient une contre-mémoire qui les en écartaient. La décision de ces derniers d'ignorer l'histoire des chansons traduites reflète des préférences culturelles qui se sont construites dans les années 1970 plutôt que celles qui ont été vécues dans les années 1960. Cet article remet en valeur l'histoire des chansons traduites dans les années 1960 en France et explore le phénomène rétro dans la musique française et ses rapports à la musique pop des années 1960. À la lumière de la popularité décroissante des chansons traduites à la fin de la décennie, cet article veut souligner le rôle central qu'a joué par le tube de Laurent Voulzy, « Rockollection » de 1977 dans ce remodelage du passé musical français.

Mots-clés : *globalisation – origine – revival – traductologie – yéyé*

In May 1977, Laurent Voulzy released “Rockollection,” an eleven-minute single divided across two sides that finally launched a long and successful career for the singer. “Rockollection,” a combination of narrative verses sung in French and choruses taken from popular English language songs, was a cultural sensation during the summer, occupying the top spot in the French hit parades for three months before disappearing in September. The song’s lyrics offer a vivid, youthful recollection of French life in the 1960s: memories of vacations in Saint Malo, falling in love, and most importantly listening to music (Voulzy, 1977). The memories of choruses from songs by Van Morrison, Little Eva, and Bob Dylan are constitutive of Voulzy’s remembrances of the 1960s when he was fascinated by foreign music. Voulzy frames a narrative of both personal and collective memory of these songs, and the commercial success of “Rockollection” suggests French audiences embraced his vision of the sixties. However, his emphasis on the centrality of these songs belies their significance to general French audiences in the recent past and the reality of how the French experienced the influx of foreign popular music, especially since “Rockollection” references the original English versions rather than the translated versions that fascinated French audiences through radio broadcasts, television specials, and commercial recordings.

Voulzy creates through “Rockollection” a memory of the sixties in which the French easily assimilated the forms of rock and roll culture that developed in Anglo-American contexts. Rather than

referencing the translation songs that propelled the careers of the *yé-yé* stars of the early 1960s and introduced the sound of rock and roll to France, Voulzy constructs his version of the 1960s in which Anglophone songs exclusively define his memory of the period. “Rockollection” reflects the cultural realities of the late 1970s more than those of the 1960s, particularly as the tastes of French audiences had changed. The narrative of his song suggests an anachronistic memory based on the cultural present, establishing a countermemory to the more established collective memories of the 1960s that were part of French society.

Voulzy, however, was not alone in his reassessment of the past. Similar to trends in the United States and Great Britain, nostalgia was a popular phenomenon in France, manifest in cinema through the *mode rétro* and in music with the appearance of new bands such as Au Bonheur des dames and Albert et sa Fanfare poliorcétique. Historian Pascal Ory sees these cultural movements as concurrent instances of *rétrophilie*, the French fascination with the past (1983: 114). The musical examples illustrate the revivalist trend in popular music in which the sounds of early rock and roll were celebrated in contrast to the more current styles that characterized post-sixties rock music. The retro style differs from that of “Rockollection” by emphasizing the more prominent French experience of popular music during the 1960s: translation songs. However, revivalist bands were not outright replicas of sixties rock but rather humorous exaggerations of retro style that reimaged the past.

These various phenomena of *rétrophilie* reveal the different registers of memory operant during the 1970s and the various rationales for nostalgia. In the case of the *mode rétro*, new films and novels challenged the existing narrative of the Occupation and the actions of the French people and, as scholars have noted, this challenge allowed French audiences to grapple with the complexity of actions and inaction during the Second World War. The *mode rétro* transformed the collective memory of the Occupation, although not without controversy (Briggs, 2011: 384-5). Popular memory was of central interest to the French as they debated the myths of resistance that developed during the immediate postwar period. Music was certainly less controversial than cinema and literature but also an expression of *rétrophilie*. Popular music, especially examples from the recorded era, evokes strong nostalgia by reminding listeners of older aesthetics and styles. In the mid-1970s, an entire nostalgia industry developed that idealized early rock and roll music as evidence of a cultural golden age. In this sense, nostalgia signifies a longing for the past but one that involves the reinterpreting and reevaluation of historical experiences (Wilson, 2005 : 26-7). The nostalgia industry of the 1970s mostly presented a version of popular music that subsumed the attendant anxieties of rock and roll in the early 1960s within a romanticized notion of innocence. This seemingly effortless reconstruction of the past exemplifies what Svetlana Bohm sees as nostalgia’s ability to obliterate history (2001: xv). The reimagining of the past evident in the nostalgic moment of the 1970s recasts it to serve the needs of the present and to

provide new forms of collective memory. Voulzy’s “Rockollection” reflects these aspects of nostalgia, completely rewriting the narrative of pop music in the 1960s by obfuscating the importance of the translation song.

However, nostalgia can also serve as a method of reflecting on historical changes, which was evident in the music of the revivalists. Unlike Voulzy, French revivalists during the 1970s embraced the translation song and the experiences of early rock and roll in France. The appearance of new subcultures dedicated to the promotion of forgotten artists and sounds from the early 1960s illustrates how nostalgia also articulated the changes in French culture and society through a longing for the recent past. Revivalists’ music reminded audiences just how much music had changed. Elizabeth Guffey suggests that retro culture illustrates the modern period’s obsession with change, with the past being a measure of such change (2004: 10-11). Both of these nostalgic registers were evident in 1970s France, but the commercial success of “Rockollection,” both then and now, suggests that Voulzy’s version of nostalgia resonated with a greater part of the listening public.

The Translated Sounds of the Sixties

When rock and roll first appeared in France in the mid-1950s, many thought another youth fad had made its way across the Atlantic. The first rock and roll song recorded in French, Henry Cording and his Original Rock and Roll Boys’ “Rock and Roll

Mops,” exemplified such attitudes. The song was a parody concocted by Cording (alias Henri Salvador) and Boris Vian to cash in on the rock and roll craze in 1956. Mocking this new trend in its lyrics, Salvador and Vian recorded a musical backdrop that matched the sounds of early rock and rollers such as Bill Haley and the Comets and Elvis Presley. Although Salvador’s single did not make much of an impact in the French hit parades, it was soon followed by a slew of new recordings by teenaged singers, who would eventually be known as *les copains*. Unlike Salvador’s and Vian’s original composition, the songs of *les copains* were largely translations of American rock and roll. Their commercial success laid the foundation for the development of a broad, young French audience.

As *les copains* (and *les copines*), Richard Anthony, Johnny Hallyday, Eddie Mitchell (as both the leader of Les Chaussettes Noires and a solo artist), Sylvie Vartan, and Sheila all became household names thanks to their association with French versions of foreign songs. The covering of songs was not unique to the French case, however. With the advent of recorded music in the early twentieth century, the recording industry recognized the value of a cover song, a rerecording of an existing song by a different artist. Initially a business practice developed by record companies in the 1950s to take commercial advantage of recording technology, a cover song can serve multiple purposes, including an artist’s attempt at inclusion within a broader cultural context, the articulation of artistic intent, and the celebration of aesthetic changes since the initial recording. Cover songs were a method of navigating different forms of identity,

typically racial or gendered in character and a measure of cultural change in the postwar period (Schiffer, 2010: 77). The availability of an English language song catalog for French record companies also illustrates how the cover song bridged the musical barriers between American youth culture and French audiences.

The influx of American songs *à la française* was evident at end of the 1950s, when Pathé Marconi, a subsidiary of EMI, signed several young singers, including Richard Anthony, to record new versions of existing hits. The international success of Paul Anka’s “Diana” led to a slew of re-recordings of the song in multiple languages. The commercial potential of translating songs bolstered the French recording industry and created a new constellation of young pop stars. Anthony was the first of this cohort to find commercial success with his 1959 recording “Nouvelle vague.” A translation of the Coasters’ “Three Cool Cats,” Anthony’s version shows some of important transformations that occurred as the song was reworked for a new context. While the Coasters’ original English version focused on the humorous courtship between the titular young men and a trio of young women, Anthony’s translation instead emphasizes the promise of youth, noting, “Three girls approach/ Singing an Elvis Presley song/ Then our three buddies suddenly awoke/ To this new wave, new wave” (1959). The sexual horseplay of the English version is muted and instead the allure of rock and roll was celebrated in the French lyrics. More than a translation, Anthony’s “Nouvelle vague” reveals how French record producers and songwriters reworked existing songs to introduce them to the

French youth market. Thanks to its success, his version was the one of "Three Cool Cats" that most French youth encountered in the early sixties.

Anthony's single signaled the emergence of rock and roll as a viable commercial force in France, and he was soon followed by other young people. *Les copains* tuned in to the popular afternoon radio program on Europe 1, "Salut les copains," hosted by Daniel Filipacchi and the sole broadcast in French that based its programming on rock and roll music. Filipacchi wanted to satisfy the desires of French youth for this new music and created his radio show in 1959. "Salut les copains" highlighted the explosion of recordings, primarily adaptations of American songs, by young French singers. Filipacchi subsequently launched a glossy magazine of the same title dedicated to *les copains* in an attempt to define aspects of youth culture in the early 1960s (Tinker, 2010). The program and magazine helped to build the careers of teen idols such as Johnny Hallyday, Sylvie Vartan, Claude François, and others, all of whom had early success thanks to translation songs, and were influential in establishing the meaning of pop music in sixties France.

More than the other *copains*, Hallyday has become an institution in French pop music (Looseley, 2003: 25-6). Hallyday's initial singles released on Vogue Records were original recordings penned by George Garvarentz, an important producer in French pop, and Charles Aznavour, a successful singer during the 1950s. However, Hallyday then moved to the Philips label and became an outright cultural phenomenon with his version of Chubby

Checker's "Let's Twist Again," "Viens danser le twist," in 1962. The twist sensation in France led to a series of imitators who essentially copied his version of Checker's song. After the twist mania of the summer of 1962, Hallyday recorded a string of translations; "L'idole des jeunes" [Ricky Nelson's "Teen Idol"] and "Pas cette chanson" [Ben E. King's "Don't Play That Song"] also charted that year. Much of Hallyday's early success was predicated on his ability to translate the energy and style of American songs into French, communicating their meaning to a new audience. Indeed, critics initially believed Hallyday to be a living combination of American and French identity; "A young man who makes young music for young people, an American of French culture, he sings well in both French and English" (Jouffra, 1993: 42). Hallyday's abilities to convey musical ideas through translation songs and successfully imitate foreign models helped him as the styles of popular music shifted after 1963, but he was not alone in this practice.

Record companies signed many young people to recording contracts, and most of these artists, including Anthony and Hallyday's future paramour Sylvie Vartan, launched their careers through translation songs. At times, their songs directed their audiences to the original versions in English but other times their songs were the definitive version for French listeners. In an example of the former, the popularity of Vartan's "Est-ce que tu le sais?" in 1962, when it charted in the hit parades for five months, also drew attention to Ray Charles' "What'd I Say?" Charles' version had a brief appearance alongside Vartan's

in February 1962. Similarly, Anthony's "Fich' le camp Jack" fostered French young people's interest in Charles' original "Hit the Road Jack" that same year in April. The French versions existed contemporaneously with the English ones in some cases, suggesting that the translations introduced listeners to songs established elsewhere.

The biggest commercial success of 1962 was another translation song, not "Viens danser le twist" but Anthony's "J'entends siffler le train," an adaptation of the American folk tune "500 Miles". Popularized as part of the folk music revival of the 1950s, "500 Miles" had become part of the repertoire of popular American performers such as the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary, but the only version to chart in France was Anthony's "J'entends," which became a standard in the French songbook. Although Anthony's version is certainly based on these others, especially in the elegiac arrangement, it was the only one to reach a significant audience in France. Beyond Anthony, Vartan, and Hallyday, the French hit parades of 1962 and '63, the height of the *yé-yé* phenomenon in France, were dominated by translations of American songs rather than the original recordings.

This trend continued as popular music styles in the United States and Great Britain changed with the cultural impact of the Beatles after 1963. Beat groups became more influential on the aesthetic of rock and roll and a slew of new songs provided material for French singers seeking to keep up with the times. Certainly, one of the more famous translations in this transition period was Hallyday's "Le pénitencier," a version of "House of the

Rising Sun" modeled after the Animals' hit. In the month of September of 1964, both versions occupied the top two spots on the French hit parades (Hallyday's at the top). Then the Animals' version faded while Hallyday's continued to chart and sell, eventually becoming a staple of his legendary live shows. By 1964, English language songs appeared more and more in the French charts but these were often accompanied by French language versions that had a greater degree of commercial success.

The translation song remained a staple of many French singers' recording success. Even so, the 1960s saw the emergence of innovative French pop composers such as Serge Gainsbourg, Françoise Hardy, and Michel Polnareff, artists who combined elements of rock and roll with the French musical traditions associated with *chanson* to create a new *mélange* of styles. Nevertheless, the translation of American (and British) hits proved to be commercially viable even at the end of the decade. While foreign artists made inroads into the French marketplace by the late 1960s, the established stars from earlier in the decade continued to thrive with translation songs—for example, Hallyday's "Cours plus vite Charlie," a version of Eddie Cochran's "Cut across Shorty," reached the top of the charts in 1968, knocking off the Beatles' "Hey Jude." In many ways then, the translation song defined a large part of the music experience of the French audiences during the 1960s, often to the chagrin of French music critics. The inauthentic nature of 1960s French pop music has been stressed in numerous music histories, as the *yé-yés* were labeled as imitators (Calvet, 1974: 34; Verlant, et al, 1997: 56; C. Eudeline, 2006: 10).

The emergence of new music magazines in France in the late 1960s—*Rock & Folk* (1966) and *Best* (1968)—signaled a growing interest among elements of French audiences in the Anglophone versions of songs rather than translations. Still, if the hit parades can serve as an indicator, this interest was limited as translations continued to have commercial success in France. Yet a new trend in the new decade signaled a sea change in musical style, one that found inspiration in the songs from the beginning of the rock and roll era but not necessarily translations.

Rétrophilie dans les années soixante-dix

During the 1970s, renewed interest in the youth culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s was apparent in numerous western nations. The United States, Great Britain, and France all experienced a revival of early rock and roll style that reached a level of cultural significance with a series of films, theatrical productions, and musical recordings rooted in an aesthetic based on an idealized version of the past. *American Graffiti* (1973), *Grease* (1972), *That'll Be the Day* (1973), and the music of Sha Na Na are examples of this retro phenomenon in the Anglophone world. France had several examples as well, as musicians from the early 1960s whose careers had faded returned to the spotlight and new groups formed to pay homage to the sounds of early rock and roll. French fans celebrated the “âge d’or du yé-yé,” but the nostalgia for the early days of rock and roll was selective, focusing on certain aspects of a more diverse musical culture.

Moreover, the revivalism of the early 1970s signifies a different form of nostalgia, since it did not target those who experienced this culture in its initial form. As Guffey observes, the nostalgia for the 1950s and ’60 was often a form of escapism for young people who had not been consumers of the original sources of the revival (2006 : 112). Instead, musical nostalgia extends both from the tendency of popular music artists to seek inspiration from predecessors and from the commercial interests of recording companies to sell existing recordings to new audiences. At the beginning of the 1970s, French singers such as Eddy Mitchell and Dick Rivers, whose careers had not kept up with the changing trends in popular music, found themselves part of a revival of their music from the previous decade. Each had continued to record songs in the early rock and roll style and attracted new audiences among young people interested in the rocker subculture.

As part of the panoply of postwar subcultures, rockers were interested in the rebellious threat of rock and roll. Known as *les blousons noirs* in France, rockers appeared dangerous to society as a group of delinquents but were soon forgotten with the advent of yé-yé in the early 1960s. Still, important musicians associated with the subculture, such as Vince Taylor and Eddy Mitchell, were regularly covered within the youth music monthlies in France (Tinker, 2010: 100-5). Renewed interest in the rocker subculture in early 1970s showed that Taylor and Mitchell had not been forgotten, despite their declining commercial fortunes. Instead, new expressions of the rocker subculture—such as *les greasers*, modeled

on the style of *les blousons noirs*—formed to celebrate the musical careers of rockers. Journalist François Jouffa noted the violence associated with the subculture that fascinated new audiences that flocked to Taylor's performances in early 1972 (1994: 200).

More than just a subculture, rockers developed social associations to exchange information about early rock and roll. For example, fans banded together in the early 1970s to form Le Fédération des amateurs de rock and roll et country, which published a short-lived magazine in 1975, *Namaspamous*. This publication lionized the rebellious spirit of early rock and roll, paying homage to foreign artists such as Presley, Gene Vincent, and Buddy Holly, although stressing the importance of Johnny Hallyday in symbolizing that spirit for the French. Other periodicals, including *Phantome* and *Big Beat*, sporadically published issues between 1971 and 1973 that highlighted the careers of rockers in France and elsewhere in the 1960s. Additionally, the France-Inter radio program "Souvenirs, souvenirs" (named for a famous Hallyday song) that began in 1972 and other broadcasts such as Europe 1's "Yé-yé story" after 1975 illustrate the extent of cultural nostalgia for early rock and roll in France (Vincent and Regoli, 1979: 123) and its broad social acceptance. The revivalists' nostalgia recognized the position of the translation song as part of the experience of rock and roll in France. Still, these publications and programs stressed the importance of original English compositions in conjunction with examples of French rockers and their translations. This combination reveals how revivalists reconstructed

the past to fit their own interests, in this case the music associated with the celebration of *les blousons noirs*.

Revivalists, however, were not just interested in old recordings. Several groups wrote and recorded new songs in homage to the earlier style of rock and roll. One example, Au Bonheur des dames, formed in 1972 and openly embraced the history of *yé-yé* as a vibrant and vital part of France's musical past. The group made its debut at the Golf Drouot, a nightclub once central to the rise of French rock and roll that had lost its position as a cultural mecca by the 1970s (Laproux, 1982). Led by Roman Pipin, Au Bonheur des dames offered a version of sixties' culture rooted equally in homage and camp. The group's style combined a sartorial nod to fashions of the early sixties—matching suits, leather jackets, and pompadour hairstyles—with space-age outfits covered in glitter and topped with plastic helmets. This juxtaposition between old and new styles was similar to British subgenre of glam rock. As a subcultural movement, glam rock was a reaction to the aesthetics of psychedelic and progressive rock that came to define popular music (Auslander, 2006). Simon Reynolds observes how glam rock was a conscious revision of earlier cultural forms and ideas, even as the popularity of those forms was central to the success of the subgenre (Reynolds, 2011, 292-3).

Au Bonheur des dames combined the revisionist tendencies of glam rock with a reassertion of early French rock conventions, especially the importance of the translation song. Their debut record, 1973's *Twist*, featured both original songs and

covers of *yé-yé* hits, including "Twist à St. Tropez," which had been a hit for Les Chats sauvages in 1962. Dick Rivers' combo had been a sensation during the early years of French rock and roll, and Pipin sought to evoke that spirit. "Twist à St. Tropez" was not a translation, but the group's biggest hit, "Oh les filles!" was, illustrating how his reimagined past still recognized the centrality of translation songs to the French musical experience. Written by Marty Robbins and translated by Eddie Vartan, "Oh les filles!" was initially recorded in France by the group Les Pingouins in 1962. A translation of "Sugaree," "Oh les filles!" recaptures the jukebox culture of the early days of the Golf Drouot with surf guitar, saxophones, and call-response vocals, although producer Thierry Vincent also employs more contemporary musical conventions in the recording. Other translations on *Twist* include "Yakety Yak" and "Pauvre Laura." *Twist* reveals how revivalism in France, despite its stylistic affectations of change, still emphasized the importance of the translation song as part of the remembered experience.

Similarly, Albert et sa Fanfare poliorcétique illustrates how some rockers in the 1970s remembered the more humorous tone of early French rock and roll, as in "Rock and Roll Mops." The band, which changed from a progressive rock style favored by the French counterculture to one that aped the sound of early Anglophone rockers, created a rock opera called *Les Malédiction des Rockers* that was written in honor of Gene Vincent, who died in 1971. A combination of a circus act and rock and roll musical, *Les Malédiction* was similar to another French stage production set in the

late 1950s, 1974's *Gomina*. The brief proliferation of stage shows in France reveals the potency of this revivalist movement and the general fascination with reimagining the 1950s. The pastiche of different theatrical styles in *Les Malédiction* also shows a humorous element to this version of revivalism, echoing the comical nature of the original rock and roll songs in France through the juxtaposition of fairground music and electric guitars.

Les Malédiction was recorded and released in 1972. The record sleeve promises a "une vaste fresque historique d'un réalisme fascinant," suggesting that Albert et sa Fanfare recognize the need for historical accuracy. Unlike *Gomina*, which had original music in a retro style, *Les Malédiction* was built on covers of existing songs, such as Vincent's "Be Bop A Lula" and Little Richard's "Long Tall Sally." However, while such songs were parts of the show, Albert et sa Fanfare also included translation songs: "Eddie Sois Bon," the Chaussettes noires' translation of "Johnny Be Goode" from 1963, and "Le Diable en personne," the translation of Elvis Presley's "Devil in Disguise." The balance between the originals and the translations reflects aspects of the French hit parades, perhaps the "réalisme" referenced on the album sleeve, while also showing creativity in dealing with the past by adding new elements in the stage performance.

One other group of the revivalist movement, Le Poing, illustrates the conflation of present and past as part of the nostalgia of the early 1970s. Closer in aesthetics to retro Anglophone groups such as Flamin' Groovies or Dr. Feelgood, both of which had some success in France, Le Poing formed in 1968 and declared loyalty to the sound of early

rock and roll despite the changes in the styles that characterized popular music in this period. Le Poing's 1972 album contains several English language covers of Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Ricky Nelson. However, the band's original songs, written by guitarist Maxime Schmitt (who had also played with Au Bonheur des Dames and Vince Taylor), reveal a more contemporary sound akin to other French hard rock bands of the period—for example, the Variations and Les Frenchies, both of which recorded in English. In his memoir, Schmitt recalled the concerts he played both with Au Bonheur and Le Poing and the audiences for revivalism. Le Poing played numerous shows between the group's formation in 1968 and its dissolution in 1973, garnering interest from music critics who praised the group's combination of the older rock and roll culture and the ennui of the HLM [the government housing projects constructed in postwar France] (Schmitt, 2002: 106).

This critical observation suggests that the revivalism practiced in the early 1970s provided a cultural method for understanding the difficulties facing young people. By looking to the rebellious energy associated with the initial appearance of rock and roll, revivalists could challenge social conventions and perhaps link up with the spirit of the protests of 1968. As Yves Adrien noted in his article "Je chante le rock électrique," the rebellion of rock and roll invigorates popular music and makes it a vital part of youth culture (1973: 36). The revivalists attempted to find that vitality while still recognizing the particular nature of rock and roll in France as something initially translated. Still, the music

of Le Poing reveals how some revivalists wanted to emphasize the importance of the original English language rock over the French versions, in essence to suggest a different past to French listeners.

Recollection and "Rockollection"

One of Le Poing's early guitarists was Voulzy. Voulzy's participation in revivalism hinted at his own approach with "Rockollection." Voulzy's song echoes the same interests of the retro culture of the 1970s. But rather than just evoking the sounds and attitudes of the early rock and roll, "Rockollection" speaks directly to the act of remembrance. "Rockollection" presents a holistic vision of the past as a complete memory of the 1960s that differs from the experiences of most French young people and from the reinventions of the retro movement. In this sense, the song serves more as a form of countermemory than nostalgia, although there is a nostalgic tone to Voulzy's performance. Michel Foucault notes that countermemory challenges the established or accepted historical narrative to offer different perspectives to question social norms (1980: 176). "Rockollection" then follows a similar trajectory as the *mode rétro*, which rejected the historical orthodoxy of the resistance myth of the Occupation. Voulzy's song memorializes a globalized France of the 1960s, one in which the foreign culture of rock and roll was embraced without the need for translation. Voulzy's song points to a paradox within French popular music: the preponderance of a type of cover song, a translation, in the 1960s and the growing popularity of foreign music over translations during the 1970s.

Recollections in “Rockollection”

Voulzy ignores the first and emphasizes the later as the experience of the 1960s.

“Rockollection” opens with Voulzy talking about a young woman outside of school. She sings a song which “is still stuck in his heart and his bones”; this refrain repeats before each new chorus in the song. Then, the song changes to Voulzy singing Little Eva’s version (and not Vartan’s more popular translation) of “The Locomotion.” Voulzy’s memory here favors the version that had less commercial impact but would undoubtedly be understood as more authentic in hindsight. In another verse, Voulzy talks of his embrace of the beatnik style, and then sings Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man” to represent this memory. Again, Voulzy ignores Hugues Aufray’s translation “L’homme orchestre,” which was more successful in reaching French audiences in the 1965. The song also references the Rolling Stones’ “Satisfaction,” the Beatles’ “A Hard Day’s Night,” and Them’s “Gloria” as songs that characterize the 1960s rather than the music of *les copains*. Voulzy ends side one singing “California Dreaming,” again which was a hit in translation for Richard Anthony as “La terre promise.” Through his selection, Voulzy recounts an imagined past, in that the first time many French youths initially heard these songs were through French covers, not the foreign “originals.”

“Rockollection” was an international smash, selling millions of copies throughout Europe. After 1977, Voulzy’s song continued to grow in length as he added more and more elements of foreign songs to the narrative in subsequent concert performances. Recently re-released in 2008, “Rockollection” was reimagined and Voulzy used new choruses to tell his story of the sixties, illustrating the plastic nature of these memories. While a Michel Polnareff song was included in the 2008 recording, translation songs remain absent in defining Voulzy musical recollection. The nostalgia for the sixties, as expressed in “Rockollection,” edited out the importance of translation songs as a method of rock and roll becoming part of French culture and instead showed the French as ready consumers of international pop music. More than revivalist, “Rockollection” offered a new vision of history that continues to resonate for French listeners who now nostalgic for its nostalgia.

These examples illustrate how popular music was a site for the contestation and reconstruction of the past in numerous ways, often having little to do with historical narratives and instead reflecting present concerns. More than just the borrowing of established and successful aesthetics, nostalgia in French popular music reveals how artists reimagined the past in manners that suited their own divergent interests.

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